



Working Lands Alliance
A Project of American Farmland Trust

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To: Environment Committee

HB 6263: AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSITION FROM THE TEN MILL PROGRAM

Submitted by: Ben Bowell, Acting Project Director, Working Lands Alliance

The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Working Lands Alliance, a statewide coalition of caring individuals and more than 200 organizations and businesses working together to raise awareness of the need and importance of saving Connecticut's valuable and vanishing farmland.

The Working Lands Alliance strongly supports HB 6263.

Enacted in 1913, the "10 Mill" program was the first forest conservation law enacted in Connecticut. Landowners with over 25 acres of forest could receive a low property rate of "10 mills" based on the value of their land at that time.

In exchange, *landowners made a 100-year commitment to preserving their land as forest.*

However, a significant problem has arisen. After 50 years in the program, a landowner's property and standing timber are re-assessed at their current developable value. Due to dramatic growth in the value of land over time, the re-assessment will likely result in property taxes increasing by 20 times or more.

These landowners have demonstrated a remarkable long-term commitment to land conservation and should not be subject to these dramatic and unsustainable increases.

Created in 1963, the 490 program has become the preferred choice for farm and forest land owners, but is not available to those who made an earlier commitment to conservation under 10 Mill. HB 6263 will address this situation for the landowners of 14,000 acres of Connecticut forestland by capping the property taxes of 10 Mill landowners at the 490 rate. The bill also provides 10 Mill landowners who are willing to place a conservation easement on their properties with the flexibility to keep their lands in 10 Mill or transition into PA 490 without a financial penalty.

It is important to act now as all remaining 10 Mill properties will hit their 50 year anniversaries between 2011 and 2022.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee on this important issue. The Working Lands Alliance is strongly supportive of HB 6263 and urges your support.